(b) and (c) Ministry of Commerce and Industry have notified Basmati Rice Export Zones, one each in U.P., Punjab and Uttaranchal States. The Agro Export Zone concept is an end to end approach for over all development of produce grown in geographically contiguous area. Fiscal benefits like waiver of purchase/mandi taxes etc. accrue to entrepreneurs in these zones. Financial assistance to Basmati rice exporters is extended for various activities like (a) purchase of sortex machine (b) setting up of effluent treatment plant (c) purchase of laboratory equipment (d) brand publicity through advertisement etc. through Basmati Development fund. Besides, financial assistance is also available for Packaging Development, Research and Development and Training. Activities like mapping of Basmati rice growing areas, development of Mill Certification procedure and launch of quality produce of India Logo are also being undertaken to encourage Basmati growing states.

In addition, APEDA is also implementing various schemes for market development, infrastructure development, quality development etc. to enhance export of Basmati rice.

**Agricultural contribution to GDP**

355. SHRI DINA NATH MISHRA : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) how much agriculture sector is likely to contribute to country's total GDP in the year 2003-04;

(b) what would be its share in economic growth in percentage terms during the same period; and

(c) what future steps Government are initiating to strengthen infrastructure, so as to considerably enhance agricultural production during the Tenth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV) : (a) and (b) No estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and contributions of individual sectors of the economy to GDP for the year 2003-04 have been released so far by the Central Statistical Organisation. However, the Mid-year Review released by the Ministry of Finance in November, 2003 has indicated a

growth of more than 8 per cent in agriculture and allied sectors and more than 7 per cent in the overall GDP in 2003-04. This implies that the share of agriculture and allied sectors in the overall economic growth is likely to exceed its share of around 22 per cent in overall GDP.

(c) Government of India have been implementing a number of schemes/programmes for improving irrigation facilities and rural infrastructure. These include Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme for expeditious completion of ongoing major & medium irrigation projects. Drought Prone Area Programme, Desert Development Programme, National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas, Integrated Wasteland Development Programme, Rural Infrastructure Development Fund established in NABARD to provide financial assistance to State Governments to augment investments in irrigation, rural roads and bridges, market yards/godowns, inland waterways etc. All these schemes/ programmes are being continued during the Tenth Plan. Besides, with a view to pass on the benefit of declining interest rates to agriculture sector, public sector banks have reduced their lending rates for agriculture to a maximum of 9 per cent per annum on crop loans up to .a ceiling of Rs. 50,000. These schemes/programmes are expected to go a long way in improving agricultural production and productivity during the Tenth Plan.

**Assistance to agricultural projects of States**

356. SHRI SK. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state the details of financial assistance provided by the Central Government to the States, West Bengal in particular, during the last two years for the development and upgradation of agricultural projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): Details of financial assistance provided by the Central Government to the States under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes is at Statement-I *(See* below).

Information regarding financial assistance to the State of West Bengal is at Statement-I I.